Monitoring of crustal movements

1806. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that scientists have cautioned, about the possibility of major earthquake in some parts of India.

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government had taken steps to monitor the crustal movements; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) At present, there is no scientific technique available anywhere in the world to forecast the occurrence of earthquakes in terms of time, location and magnitude. However, based on the seismological, geological, geophysical and geotechnical studies, the country has been divided into four seismic zones. *i.e.* zone II-V. The siesmic zonation map is published by the Bureau of Indian Standards. As per the map, zone V is considered to be the most vulnerable to earthquake occurence, while the zone II is the least.

(c) The Department of Science & Technology has a major programme on Global Positioning System (GPS) aided crustal deformation studies. Under this 30 permanent GPS stations have been established in different parts of the country.

(d) Does not arise.

Stem-cell research

1807. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government feel a need for regulating stem-cell research in India;

(b) if so, the details of any legislation being considered in this behalf; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (c) National Biothethics Committee set up by the Department of Bio-Technology (DBT) with the approval of Hon'ble Minister of Science and Technology in its sixth meeting recommended promotion of stem cell research in the country in view of its vast potential and its clinical use. There are no special legal or ethical problems in respect of stem cells, derived from adults, bone marrows or foetal cord blood. However, in respect to embryonic stem cells the Government does not allow generation of embryos for the sole purpose of obtaining stem cells. Only surplus or spare of supernumerary embryos can be used with the permission of couples from registrered Assisted Reproductive Technique (ART) clinics.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was requested by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to prepare appropriate guidelines to help in regulation of stem cell research and its application. Accordingly, a drafting committee provided brief guidelines for regulatory aspect of stem cell research to DCGI. These draft guidelines have been put on the website of the ICMR. The guidelines suggested constituting a multidisciplinary National Apex Committee (NAC) to monitor stem cell research activities in the country. It was also emphasized that newer technology should be thoroughly examined before approving any research. It was further suggested that this committee should examine all proposals involving stem cells of any source. Centres involved in stem cell research should be registered with the committee. Currently in the absence of a National Committee, an Expert Committee has been constituted to monitor and review stem cell research activities under ICMR.

The issues regarding legislation and ethical issues involved in stem cell research are being discussed by a joint working group of ICMR and DBT.

Port connectivity project in Orissa

1808. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up Rs. 5720 crore worth of port connectivity project to change the roadmap for trade;